

BOOK REVIEWS

THE WESTERN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE does not review all books sent to it by the publishers. A list of new books received is carried in the Advertising Section.

CORONARY HEART DISEASE IN YOUNG WOMEN—Edited by M. F. Oliver, MD, FRCP, FRCPE, FFCM, FACC(Hon), Professor, Departments of Medicine and Cardiology, The Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh. Churchill Livingstone—Medical Division of Longman Inc., 19 West 44th St., New York City (10036), 1978. 262 pages, \$23.50.

It has been known for many years that acute myocardial infarction is very uncommon in women under the age of 40 or 45, with the male/female ratio being approximately 10:1 in this age group. Women lose their advantage after menopause, especially as they approach 70 years old. Oliver, who for years has been interested in this strange epidemiological fact, has organized a symposium consisting of a large number of distinguished contributors largely from the United Kingdom to review the present knowledge on the subject. The date and place of the symposium are not given, but the fact that a good many of the references are from 1977 suggests that the symposium was held recently.

The participants in the symposium cover a wide variety of disciplines so that the material in the book brings together data and opinions not readily found in textbooks on cardiology. Endocrinologists, hematologists, epidemiologists, cardiologists, immunologists, experts in metabolic disease, pathologists and geneticists are all included and discuss the subject of coronary disease in young women from their particular vantage point. No discussion was provided regarding social-psychological-economic "stress" factors in etiology. An interesting omission from the distinguished group of participants is the absence of a psychiatrist or a psychologist.

The various possible mechanisms for the decreased prevalence of acute myocardial infarction in young women is discussed from a wide variety of approaches. There are considerable data on the role of the sex hormones during the course of the reproductive life of women, as well as after intervention by the various contraceptive pills and by estrogens after menopause. There is a comprehensive discussion of the role of metabolic and coagulation factors, especially following the use of oral contraceptives, and there is a discussion of the possible adverse effect of the androgens in men. The possible role of progesterones is discussed but not in the same detail as the estrogens. Spain raised the provocative question of whether the decreased prevalence was due to a protective effect of femaleness or an adverse effect of maleness. It is of interest that high density lipoprotein levels are higher in women than in men.

Each chapter is followed by a valuable, selected, up-to-date reference list and a short discussion by other participants which will be very helpful to the reader.

The book brings together all the current theories regarding coronary disease in women but does not conclude with a clear consensus as to the cause of the apparent protection in young females to acute myocardial infarction. Cigarette smoking has more than doubled during the last 25 years in women, especially young women, while consumption has leveled off in men during this period. The role of established risk factors such as hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, diabetes, a positive family history and cigarette smoking are all explored, especially when they occur in combination with metabolic and thrombotic factors that are important in women who take oral contraceptive agents. It was suggested that the adverse effects of oral contraceptive agents might

be idiosyncratic, involving only a small group of women who are especially susceptible to their effects. Surgical menopause before the age of 40, especially when it occurs in association with other risk factors, is the most potent precursor of early coronary disease in women. It is clear that more research is required to elucidate the pathogenetic mechanisms.

There was a good deal of discussion about the safety and effectiveness of the dose of estrogens in the various contraceptive pills, whether 100, 50 or 30 μ g. Insufficient data, however, were available to indicate the advantages of the 30 μ g pill with respect to its effect on blood pressure, lipids or coagulation factors. Further, the problem of "breakthrough" vaginal bleeding was not sufficiently explored.

The book should be of considerable interest to students of coronary disease, especially the discussion of coagulation and endocrine responses not usually elaborated in any detail in textbooks on cardiology. The book can be recommended to all physicians who wish an up-to-date account of the present status of the apparent "protection" of young women to acute myocardial infarction as well as an analysis of the increased incidence of the condition in women over 45 in the past 25 years. The experts in the different fields of medicine by examining in detail our current knowledge provide a distinct service to the profession.

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GENERAL UROLOGY—Ninth Edition—Donald R. Smith, MD, Professor of Surgery and Chief, Section of Urology, College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Rutgers Medical School, Piscataway, NJ; Recent Consultant in Urology, Egypt, under the auspices of People-to-People Health Foundation, Inc. (Project HOPE); and Professor of Urology, Emeritus, University of California, San Francisco. Lange Medical Publications, Drawer L, Los Altos, CA (94022), 1978. 541 pages, \$14.50.

This ninth edition of a tried and true textbook about general urology is an update and expansion from the 1975 eighth edition. It has increased in size by almost 50 pages and in price by \$3.50. It is well worth the investment for any serious student of urology. Dr. Donald Smith, who was formerly Professor and Chief of Urology at the University of California, San Francisco, has put together in this multiauthored paperback edition an excellent basic text. I tell our medical students that if they know everything that is in it, they will know more than most urologists.

Particularly interesting and updated are the chapters on ultrasonic examination of the urinary tract and radioisotope kidney studies. The chapter on abnormalities of sexual differentiation is unusually well done, and infertility and vasectomy are well covered.

The chapter on chronic renal failure and dialysis, which formerly included transplantation, has been broken into two separate chapters with a rewrite of the two subjects. Particularly important and well done, it seems to me, is Smith's chapter on psychosomatic aspects of urology which he correctly puts into proper perspective. He includes a section on impotence in that chapter.

The paperback volume is lithographed and contains numerous, very informative, clear line drawings, photo-